

Seven Moments

by Simply Christian

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Summary: Seven chapters of the Field Marshal's story during the Fall of Reach. From the beginning, you know the end.

1. Prologue

The Field Marshal walked through the hallways of the _Seeker of Truth_, the flagship of the Fleet of Particular Justice. The Supreme Commander had summoned him for a meeting about the plan for the upcoming insertion on one of the human worlds.

He was an old general; his first year in the Covenant Army had also marked the year they had discovered the humans and began their war of extermination against them. Because of his long and decorated career, his name was eligible for a position on the High Council. It was quite likely that whatever this next campaign would be, it would also be his last.

The doors opened for him, and waiting inside the room was Supreme Commander Thel 'Vadamee. The Field Marshal's peer turned as he heard the door opened, and spoke a simple greeting to him.

The Field Marshal returned the salutation, and then inquired, "What do the Prophets require us to do?"

"We managed to track one of the humans' vessels to a major base of theirs," replied 'Vadamee.

"Did you? Most impressive," complimented the Field Marshal, "The humans are usually quite thorough in eliminating all evidence of the location of their worlds."

"We latched a stealth probe onto one of their vessels after a battle, and traced it to this base," explained 'Vadamee, "Unfortunately, the planet is also undoubtedly the most heavily defended and most fortified world we have seen yet, so I am taking time to gather more

ships to my fleet before attacking.

"In the meantime, I need someone to complete an infiltration mission, to gather information on relics on the planet. As ranking Army officer, and former Commander of the Special Operations of the Covenant, I believe you to be the best choice."

"I am honored."

"I will also send a stealth corvette with you, to supply troops as a diversion, in case our presence is discovered. Here is the complement."

The Field Marshal nodded his assent as he took the datapad from 'Vadamee's hands. He gave a brief look at the list before blinking in surprise and looking back at the Supreme Commander.

"Skirmishers?"

It was general knowledge that there was a subspecies of Kig-Yar known as the Skirmishers. While they were stronger, faster, and more agile than their more common cousins, they were also far fewer in number, and reproduced slowly. It was because of their limited population that the High Council had allowed the majority of Skirmishers to stay out of fighting the war against the humans. To date, only a few small teams had ever seen action. In fact, it took a vote from the Council to allow even that small number to participate.

"How did you get the Council to allow you to have such numbers into your fleet?"

"I convinced them that we would need every asset available in order for this campaign to succeed," the Supreme Commander replied, and gestured the Field Marshal to the middle of the room, where a holographic projector stood. "Come, and look at this."

The machine came to life, and the holographic image of a planet appeared.

"This is the world we are to attack," explained 'Vadamee, "The humans call it Reach."

The Field Marshal cared little for the naming habits of the enemy, but did not comment on it.

"It is defended by two dozen satellites, twenty of them possessing heavy guns powerful enough to take out an average cruiser in one or two hits," 'Vadamee continued, "Along with those satellites are no fewer than a hundred warships. And this is only the information our probe was able to pick up from space. We do not know of their ground numbers, although it reasonable to assume that they, too, will be great."

"Field Marshal, out of all the battles against the humans, this will be our hardest."

"Victory is inevitable," he replied confidently.

"Indeed," he agreed, "But at what cost? Casualty rates in previous

human conflicts have been alarmingly high, and none of those planets were as heavily defended as this one."

The Field Marshal reluctantly conceded the point. As much as he despised humans, he knew from personal experience on how determined they could be.

"We are going to need every advantage to win this conflict," reiterated 'Vadamee, "That is why I believe adding Skirmishers to our ranks will aid in the battle; the Council agrees."

The Field Marshal merely nodded.

"If this meeting is concluded, I will ready my team," he said, saluting the Supreme Commander.

"All who walk the blessed path will find salvation," dismissed 'Vadamee, returning the gesture.

The Field Marshal blinked in slight surprise, but finished the mantra of a Minor, the first mantra all Sangheili were taught to recite upon entering the Covenant military. "Even in death."

* * *

><p>Author's Note: Basically, this is my take on the Field Marshal's point of view from Halo Reach. As the only recurring Covenant character of that game, he always interested me. And no, I will not be thinking up a name for him. I will always refer to him as just the Field Marshal.

Since this will be from the Covenant's POV, 'Vadamee (A.K.A. the future Arbiter) will play a significant role in this story. One thing I was disappointed about in Reach was that he didn't even get a cameo role, since technically he would be the unseen Big Bad of Halo Reach.

I also used this chapter to help explain why Skirmishers had never been seen before Halo Reach. While I thought the Skirmishers were cool, I was disappointed that they came so late into the series, and without proper explanation on where they came from. Yes, it's canon that we don't see them after Reach because of the heavy casualties they sustained, but why haven't they been mentioned before? My guess is that Skirmishers weren't exactly the most populous of races before Reach either.

And yes, I did purposely publish this on September 14, the second anniversary of the release of Halo Reach.

2. Winter Contingency

The Field Marshal watched in silence from his hiding place.

Just as the reports from his outside forces had warned, several Demons had entered the fray, and despite the efforts of the Army, they were closing in on the Field Marshal's position, interrupting their mission. Fortunately, he had already gathered the necessary information, and that he and his Zealots needed to do was to get out.

The reports said there were six of them, but only four had made it to the Field Marshal's immediate location. He reasoned that the other two were probably further back, holding their position to keep attackers from advancing further into the base.

If only they knew they were too late for that.

The Field Marshal took a good look at the new opponents.

The first one, in blue armor, was inspecting the condition of one of the other humans that was surprisingly still alive. From the posture and demeanor, this one was most likely the leader.

The second was the smallest of the four and inspecting some of the machinery that had been damaged during their mission. This one was unique in the fact that the right arm appeared to be artificial.

The third, and closest to his position, was a true giant of a human. Standing as tall as a Sangheili, the Field Marshal saw the large Demon remove another human, easily the smallest one in the room, from its hiding place, one that his team had missed from their first sweep.

The fourth Demon, who was inspecting the body of one its dead kin, was the one that truly caught the Field Marshal's attention, however. It was not the largest one, nor did it seem like the leader, but something about it that spoke of pure lethality.

While every Demon was a foe to be reckoned with, there was a special aura around this one, one he had seen before. When a Sangheili became skilled and strong enough, they did not even need to move for one to tell that he was simply dangerous. And then there were warriors that simply radiated an invisible warning spelling "Bringer of Death." Supreme Commander 'Vadamee was a warrior with such an aura. This Demon was another.

The Field Marshal hated to admit it, but he knew that he would not be able to win a straight-out fight against four Demons, even with the help of his two Zealots.

The Zealots he had chosen for this mission were trained in Special Operations like he was. All three of them knew how to strike from the dark, and learned how to sacrifice honor in certain situations to attain victory. If only their armor had active camouflage!

Fortunately, they did not necessarily need to win; they just needed to get out of the human base.

Something else that played into their favor was the racket the newly discovered human was making. It was distracting the Demons, focusing their attentions on it. If there was a time to attack them, it was now.

The Field Marshal made a silent command with his hands, and moved into action, his Zealots quickly moving in after him.

He jumped down, ignited his energy sword, and made a sweep at the giant. With surprising agility, the Demon ducked and rolled away with

the other human, keeping them both out of reach.

The Field Marshal wasted no time in charging forward past the giant and towards the smallest and weakest-looking of the Demons, ignoring the bullets that were now spraying his shields. Unfortunately, once again his attack failed to land as the leader pushed its subordinate out of the way, and the Field Marshal's shields finally fell to the bullet fire from the most dangerous of the Demons.

Quickly, he changed directions and ran towards the lethal Demon, knocking it down by shoving his hand against its face.

The Field Marshal hated to run, especially when he did not know if his Zealots would survive, but he knew he had to. The information on the relics had to be delivered to the Supreme Commander.

On his way out, the Field Marshal sped by the other two Demons. One was a green-armored sniper, while the other was slightly shorter and darker, and had something resembling a skull painted on the face of its helmet. He kept the image of them and the other Demons in his mind, as he had the feeling he would encounter them again.

* * *

><p>Author's Note: Yes, I deliberately kept the description of Noble Six vague, to keep in the spirit that the player of the game is the one in the suit. Even Six's gender will be kept ambiguous, which will be made easier by the fact that the Field Marshal will refer to all humans as "it." So whatever suit you wear in the Halo Reach campaign is the one Six will be wearing throughout this fic.

And the Field Marshal describing the lethal aura of Noble Six is a reference to the fact that he/she is one of only two Spartans that are rated "hyper-lethal." I'll give you 117 guesses on who the other one is.

3. Arbiter

The Field Marshal was not happy.

He had always known that Supreme Commander 'Vadamee was very liberal in his views towards the other races of the Covenant, but that did not change the fact that the Field Marshal was quite irked at the current situation.

He was in another strategy meeting with the Supreme Commander on board the Seeker of Truth. It was only out of respect of aforementioned naval leader that the Field Marshal did not draw his sword and slay the impudent being that felt as if it were on equal ground with the Sangheili.

No, the Field Marshal was not pleased at all that 'Vadamee had allowed the Brute chieftain in on the meeting.

"What agitates you, Field Marshal?"

The old general was shaken out of his fuming by the Supreme Commander's words. Since he askedâ€|

"Why is this Brute here?" he asked. Or, perhaps more accurately, snarled.

The aforementioned chieftain bristled at the slur, but did not react further.

"Magnus is the Alpha Chieftain of all Jiralhanae forces in the Fleet of Particular Justice," 'Vadamee explained calmly, "Therefore, I believe his presence here necessary."

"Supreme Commander," the Field Marshal replied, "I thought that this was a meeting for strategic planning. So why is a Brute needed here?"

Including Brutes into the Fleet of Particular Justice was unusual, unprecedented, and unorthodox in itself. The infamous tension between them and the Sangheili was so great that it was common sense that the two races should be kept separate. The Field Marshal was willing to accept the Brute forces for the upcoming invasion. As 'Vadamee had said, the Covenant would need every resource they could get in order to win the battle.

But allowing their leader to help plan the invasion?
Unacceptable!

"Afraid that I might actually have good ideas?" taunted the chieftain. The Field Marshal refused to acknowledge the creature with a name, even in his head.

"I would sooner expect a sound strategy from an Unggoy," sneered the Field Marshal.

"Both of you, silence," intervened the Supreme Commander, "I have neither the time nor the inclination to play arbiter between the two of you."

Reluctantly, the two generals obeyed. While Supreme Commander was technically the same level of rank as Field Marshal, it was customary that naval commanders be given precedence while on their ship.

"Field Marshal, Magnus and the Jiralhanae under his command have proven themselves to me that they are honorable warriors," said 'Vadamee firmly, "I will not tolerate slurs against their name in my fleet. Understood?"

The Field Marshal growled lowly, but nodded.

"Magnus, be more patient with the more conservative attitudes of the Field Marshal, and do not antagonize him," the mediator said to the Brute, who also nodded his assent.

"Good. Now we can begin."

The three military leaders faced the holographic projection of the human planet.

"We will first send in an advance fleet to test their strength, gather intelligence, and plant a base of operations," began the

Supreme Commander, "It will be a supercarrier battlegroup, led by the _Long Night of Solace_."

While the Field Marshal had already been convinced that 'Vadamee was pulling every resource he could to win this campaign, that opinion was only reinforced by the inclusion of such a titanic ship. It was no surprise that the Supreme Commander could get ahold of a supercarrier battlegroup like the _Long Night of Solace_, but it still showed that the naval strategist was truly concerned about the impending casualties.

"_Long Night of Solace_ will be under active camouflage, unless directly attacked or given express orders from myself or the Field Marshal," continued 'Vadamee, "At this point, it will be best if the humans underestimate our forces."

"Supreme Commander," said the Brute, "Why do we not simply launch the entire fleet against them and overwhelm them with our numbers?"

"Have you no sense of tactics?" admonished the Field Marshal, "Simple strength is not the solution to all battles. One needs to gather information about the enemy before engaging."

"Did you not gather that intelligence when you infiltrated their world, Field Marshal?" rebutted the chieftain, "And I was not talking tactics; I was speaking of the overall strategy. Would it not make more sense to have the entire fleet there to crush their navy and armies before they can retaliate properly or call for reinforcements?"

"The Field Marshal's primary mission was to gather information on relics," interjected 'Vadamee before the argument could degenerate, "As such, the only intelligence we currently possess on their military forces is the number of defense satellites and warships that they have. And we know there are at least six Demons on the planet."

"In this battle, we will need the advance fleet to go in first and gather proper information on our foes. After that is complete, we will send in the second wave. The rest of the ships that are assigned to this campaign will stop at the rendezvous point before coming to reinforce us and land the final blow to the humans."

The image of the targeted world shifted colors, and there were sections of the continents that were shaded blue, and others that were red.

"The blue sections will be where the Sangheili have jurisdiction, and the red belong to the Jiralhanae," explained 'Vadamee.

A moment later, several white dots appeared on the hologram, all of them within blue areas.

"These spots mark the locations of holy relics and other sites that indicate past usage by the Forerunners," he continued, "Needless to say, these sectors are not to be glassed."

"Pardon me, Supreme Commander," interrupted the chieftain, "But I cannot help but notice that the Jiralhanae have not been assigned any

of the tasks for the relics."

"Correct," confirmed 'Vadamee, "While I have full confidence in the combat abilities of you and your warriors, I know that your methods can be blunt. Handling holy relics require a more delicate touch."

Still obviously unhappy with the situation, but accepting 'Vadamee's decision, the chieftain nodded.

The Field Marshal was satisfied to hear that the Supreme Commander was not fool enough to believe Brutes to be equals to the Sangheili.

Over the next hour, they refined the initial stages of attack, reserving the more refined details until after they had gotten information from the advance fleet.

"That is all, generals," concluded 'Vadamee, "Field Marshal, I request that you join me on the Long Night of Solace in the advance fleet."

"I am honored to accept, Supreme Commander," replied the Field Marshal.

* * *

><p>Author's Note: This chapter covers the Field Marshal's feelings about Brutes. I went over how Jiralhanae felt about being discriminated against in my fanfic "Semper Fidelis," so I tried to get how Elites would feel about Brutes in this campaign.

4. Tip of the Spear

"Field Marshal, the humans are on the move."

"Tell the ground troops to counterattack at will," said the Field Marshal to the Fleet Master, Rho 'Barutamee, who had spoken.

Due to their size and cost, there were only a few supercarriers that were permanently assigned to a fleet. Several of them were in the Second Fleet of Homogenous Clarity safeguarding High Charity. The only other permanently assigned supercarrier was the Sublime Transcendence, the flagship of the Combined Fleet of Righteous Purpose under Imperial Admiral Xytan 'Jar Wattinree. All others were more independent, and were escorted by other ships that varied from corvettes to battlecruisers, making up their own small fleet. Because of this escort fleet, only Fleet Masters were permitted to captain supercarriers.

"Fleet Master, I need to see the battlefield," continued the Field Marshal. While he had full authority of the troops operating on the surface of the planet, anything that happened on the Long Night of Solace had to have the permission of the naval commander.

'Barutamee nodded and barked an order to a member of the bridge crew. A moment later, the desert terrain of the battle just below them

appeared.

"The humans are attacking our forces?" asked 'Vadamee as he entered the bridge.

"Yes. They are showing remarkable success," commented the Field Marshal, taking note of the movement of the human troops, "Especially this point here."

He pointed to a smaller group of humans that appeared to be approaching one of their anti-aircraft towers.

"Magnify that position," ordered the Field Marshal.

The image focused on the specified area, and showed a small human vehicle moving through the canyons. But the most important detail about the vehicle was the identity of the occupants.

"Of course," remarked the Field Marshal, "Demons."

"From the looks of things, it seems as if they are attempting to take down the spire," 'Vadamee noted, observing the momentum of the human assault.

"Fleet Master," called out one of the bridge crew, "There are two human frigates is holding position just outside of range of the nearest anti-aircraft guns."

"So, that's their plan," 'Vadamee thought out loud, "Take out the guns, let their ships destroy the spire. But how do they plan on getting past the electromagnetic shields?"

"Do you want us to destroy the ships?" asked 'Barutamee.

"No," replied 'Vadamee, "If they cannot destroy the anti-aircraft guns, then the frigate cannot participate in the battle, and revealing our presence would be counterproductive at this time. If they succeed, we will let them believe they are chasing victory."

And so the two leaders responsible for the whole invasion of Reach watched as the Demons destroyed the anti-aircraft guns, fought their way through their forces, successfully took down the shield from the inside, and allowed one of the frigates to approach the spire.

"Move us in a position so that we can destroy the frigate with the Ventral Cleansing Beam," commanded 'Vadamee, "I would prefer to take it down in one strike."

"Aye, sir," the Weapons Master acknowledged.

The Field Marshal was mildly surprised when he saw that the humans had used their main cannon to destroy the spire. In all his years in the Covenant Army, he had never seen them use their main projectile weapon inside the atmosphere.

"It appears that the humans wish to get our attention," commented the Field Marshal.

"If only they knew they already had it," replied 'Vadamee, and

directed a simple order to the Weapons Master, "Are we in position yet?"

"We are," was the affirmation.

"Fire," ordered the Supreme Commander.

The Long Night of Solace let its active camouflage fall and with one excruciatingly easy shot, the human ship was destroyed. Hours later, a new spire was up and running, as if the human attack had never occurred.

Evening came, and the Long Night of Solace took up low orbit around the planet.

"I am satisfied with the information we have gathered about their defenses," said the Supreme Commander in a private meeting with the Field Marshal and Fleet Master, "I have sent a signal the fleet, and the first wave of the ships shall depart and arrive here in two days. I myself will leave and wait at the rendezvous point for the rest of the expected forces to arrive. After that, I will arrive with the third and final wave to land the finishing blow to this world. Fleet Master, you are in charge of the fleet I return."

"Yes, Supreme Commander."

"Field Marshal, I recommend that you stay here as well," suggested 'Vadamee.

"I was thinking the same thing, Supreme Commander," agreed the Field Marshal, and he fully did share his peer's thoughts. As the highest-ranking Army officer, it made much more sense for him to stay and oversee actions of the Covenant Army than to go and be useless in finishing preparations in a Navy operation. "Have a safe journey, and we await your return."

"It will not be too long," promised 'Vadamee.

****Author's Note:**** I remember the first time I played Halo Reach, and finished the level "Tip of the Spear." I remember grinning as the Grafton used its MAC to destroy the spire and my grin immediately falling flat as our ship got shot out of the sky and revealing a Covenant ship that made an assault carrier look like a tugboat.

For those of you who have not read the books, Imperial Admiral 'Wattinree appears in "Ghosts of Onyx."

5. Long Night of Solace

After the Supreme Commander had departed in one of the stealth corvettes and returned to the main fleet, the Field Marshal began taking his personal Phantom (equipped with cloaking) to patrol some of the human cities, and fine-tune some of his strategies for when the invasion started properly. It was on one such outing that he noticed a skirmish occurring between a human frigate and one of the corvettes.

That was odd. Humans were admittedly bold and determined, but they

never attacked one of their ships one-on-one unless they could not run, or were buying time for other humans to escape, or had a clear advantage in firepower. None of those factors were present.

The Field Marshal watched from his Phantom as the duel ended predictably with the human frigate being destroyed.

Still, something about the situation bothered him. The Field Marshal knew that that humans could be cunning, and an unreasonably suicidal engagement like the one he just witnessed indicated there was more going on than met the eye.

"Open communications to that corvette," ordered the Field Marshal.

"_Ardent Prayer_, what is your situation? Respond," called the pilot. A moment of waiting, and the pilot said, "No answer."

Now the Field Marshal was worried.

"Wait, now there's someone on the con. I'm putting it on speaker."

"_This is _Ardent Prayer_,_" came the Sangheili's voice over the intercom, "_We have just repelled an attempt by humans to board our ship. We sustained casualties, but the humans are almost wiped out._"_

"What do you mean 'almost'?" asked the Field Marshal.

"_There is still a Demon in the launching bay, but it is trapped there._"

So the humans had attempted to commandeer one of their ships. Not a bad idea, but they obviously came ill-prepared for it, even with the help of a Demon. The Field Marshal idly wondered if it was one of the same Demons he had encountered in the human base on his first mission to the planet below.

"What's your status now?" asked the pilot.

"_We are currently returning to the _Long Night of Solace_ for repairs, as our engines were damaged in the battle with the human ship," answered the Sangheili, "_Butâ€ there's something odd. The reason you did not initially hear from us is because the humans made it to the bridge and killed the entire crew here, including the General. When we got here, the humans were already gone, and the ship had been set on a refueling course._"

The Field Marshal did not wonder why an Army General was in charge of a Navy vessel. It was not uncommon for higher-ranking officers of the Army to attain a personal vessel of their own. Even though they may spend most of their fighting on the ground, possessing a ship was a mark of status among the Sangheili.

What he did wonder about was why the humans had set the _Ardent Prayer_ on a refueling course. Did they hope to cause a collision to destroy the supercarrier? If so, they would be sorely disappointed with the results; the current speed of the corvette would not be sufficient enough to even dent the shields of the _Long Night of

Solace_.

Wait a moment.

"You said that there was still a Demon in the launching bay," said the Field Marshal, "What's its status?"

"_Still holding its position. It is using a human dropship as cover from our heavy weapons, and it has managed to repulse all attempts to kill it."_

"A human dropship? Why hasn't the Demon used it to escape?"

"_We don't know. The dropship appears undamaged, but it must be malfunctioning somehow, or perhaps was damaged during the battle. Why else would the Demon stay and fight?"_

Now the Field Marshal's worry turned into outright alarm. It was common knowledge that one does not trap a Demon, even if that dropship was malfunctioning; he had witnessed Demons leaping into the vacuum of space before. If that Demon was in the launching bay of the _Ardent Prayer_, it was because it _wanted_ to be there. The Field Marshal took another look at the corvette as it grew closer to the supercarrier.

"_Ardent Prayer!_ Cease your trajectory now! This is an order from your Field Marshal!" he bellowed into the communications channel.

But it was too late.

The Field Marshal watched in horror as the unthinkable happened. Somehow, the humans managed to rig the _Ardent Prayer_ so a slipspace point opened as it was next to the _Long Night of Solace_. The titanic ship held its course for a moment before the two pieces, drawn in by gravity, began their descent to the planet's surface.

There was a shocked moment of silence in the Phantom.

Finally, the Field Marshal spoke, giving out orders and doing his best to take control of the catastrophe that had just occurred.

"Send a message to the rest of the advance fleet; tell them to regroup and instruct them to _not_ engage in combat with human ships for the time being. And contact whoever is the most senior Ship Master, and tell him that he has just been made acting Fleet Master."

"Yes, sir," acknowledged the pilot, getting to work.

"Field Marshal," one of the Zealots said slowly, "When is the fleet arriving?"

"Numerous slipspace ruptures have been detected," the pilot reported.

"Does that answer your question?" asked the Field Marshal rhetorically.

The loss of the Long Night of Solace was indeed a great blow, but the arrival of the first wave of the Fleet of Particular Justice would show the humans that it would take more than that to stop the will of the Covenant.

* * *

><p>Author's Note: The part where I wrote that having a ship was a mark of status was speculation. It is canon that for the Sangheili, sailing is an especially tough line of work, since the seas of their homeworld are far more violent than Earth's. So I just guessed that some of that identification would go on with space ships as well.

6. New Alexandria

Truth be told, the Field Marshal did not want to be here.

The Brute Alpha Chieftain had the audacity to ask for reinforcements from the Sangheili to help clean up in one of the human cities. The Field Marshal almost denied the request, just to spite the barbarian, but decided in the end to send the team for two reasons. One was that the Field Marshal knew that if a Brute chieftain was asking a Sangheili for aid, then it meant he actually needed it. The other was so that the Field Marshal could have an excuse to see personally how the Brutes were handling the campaign.

So the Field Marshal, despite wishing that he could be elsewhere, agreed to help the Brutes and personally inspect their work, to see for himself what the Supreme Commander saw in the simpletons.

He led the small air fleet of Phantoms to the city, each of them containing teams of Rangers and standard ground troops. The Field Marshal was surprised to hear a message of gratitude from the Alpha Chieftain as he entered the vicinity.

'_So at least one Brute has learned manners after all,'_ thought the Field Marshal.

He oversaw the deployment of Rangers throughout the city to help defend the jammers located in various buildings. Most missions were successful, but Demons managed to defeat the Sangheili reinforcements at two of the jammers and destroy them.

Still, despite the setbacks at the hands of Demons, the human city was falling to might of the Covenant.

The night grew older, and the battle began to die down as the two sides found less of the enemy to fight.

The old general ordered his Phantom to perform a standard patrol of the city, and pondered the actions of the Brutes. He supposed they were not completely incompetent, having conquered the majority of the city. They could not finish the job by themselves, but as much as the Field Marshal hated to admit it, that was not entirely their fault. Everyone knew that even the best of Sangheili could fall (and had fallen) in battle to Demons.

No doubt generations down the line, long after the humans were extinct, the legend of Demons would continue to terrify children and warriors alike.

"Field Marshal," the pilot called, bringing the general out of his thoughts, "I am picking up a human transmission."

"Close in on the location," he ordered.

"Yes, sir," the pilot replied, and then said, "I am receiving a message from the Brute chieftain; he is warning all forces that he has ordered glassing to begin in our area."

"Take us down and turn off all electronics until the initial blast has passed us. As soon as we are up and running again, continue to home in on that human signal," the Field Marshal ordered, "All hands brace yourselves."

As soon as the Phantom had landed on the ground, the Field Marshal felt the earth shake from the blast of the glassing procedure.

After the electromagnetic wave had passed them by, the dropship had lifted itself into the air again, and began its interrupted search for its prey.

"Field Marshal, I am picking up human movement from the immediate vicinity of the transmission, and it appears they are going to pass right by us," the pilot alerted, "But they are moving too fast to be normal humans."

"Demons," the Field Marshal simply uttered, and then ordered, "Give me a needle rifle and open the bay doors."

He grabbed the weapon offered to him by one of the Rangers and stood by the now-open doors of his Phantom. Now was the opportune moment to take out a Demon, because the electromagnetic pulse from the nearby blast would have eliminated their shields. Due to their sheer speed, he would likely only have time to snipe one, but considering the amount of damage even a single Demon could do to their forces, one would be sufficient.

Looking through the scope of the needle rifle, he saw three Demons running into visibility, and two others behind them. Those were the same five he had seen the first time he had visited this planet. The giant one was missing from their number, and the Field Marshal wondered if the Demon on board the Ardent Prayer was the one who was now absent here.

Knowing that it was now or never, the Field Marshal picked his target and fired. The needle projectile penetrated the head of the smallest Demon neatly and cleanly, and the body fell into its compatriot's arms.

The Field Marshal watched impassively as the Demon holding the body pulled out its sidearm and began firing, the other three coming out from shelter to provide cover fire for their comrade.

"Close the bay doors and take us away, before the Brutes decide to 'accidentally' glass us," the Field Marshal ordered the pilot, and watched the Demons until they were out of sight.

Even though the glassing would destroy the human city, the Field Marshal knew that it was almost a certainty that the Demons would survive.

But he was not satisfied with his work. Whether it had been due to minor rocking of the Phantom as it hovered in the air, or being too long since his days in the Special Operations division, he had missed his target. He had been aiming for the lethal one.

Still, the kill had proved as a reminder that while Demons were formidable, they were not invincible.

****Author's Note:**** The Field Marshal's last line in this chapter is a reference to how Sgt. Johnson described Scarabs, "They're tough, but they're not invincible."

I also wondered why the Field Marshal selected Kat. Out of the five Spartans there, he chose Kat. It could be he just chose a target at random, but I wonder if he was actually trying to aim for one he might know as the most dangerous one of the team.

7. Pillar of Autumn

The end was near. The Field Marshal could feel it in his bones. The human fleet was all but destroyed, and the majority of the planet had already been glassed (except for holy sites, of course). Even the local weather seemed to know, with the storm clouds overhead with their flashes of lightning.

But there were still areas where the humans held out. This particular battlefield where the Field Marshal was heading to in his Phantom was on the border between Sangheili and Brute zones, so both armies had unexpectedly mixed together. Fortunately, the two races focused more on the humans than each other, and both of them were able to keep their forces separate without superior intervention. As long as Sangheili and Brutes were united by their common enemy, they could table their grudge against each other until another day.

At one such pocket of resistance, a human capital ship was on the ground, but scans showed that it was ready to launch at any moment. A large cannon, not dissimilar to the one mounted on their warships, defended the launch site from most aircraft, destroying Phantoms and Banshees that approached.

The Field Marshal was about to order a detour when he noticed the cannon changing direction and targeting the cruiser that was coming to destroy the human ship. He immediately ordered his Phantom to open fire on the human dropships. One was destroyed, and the other one lost control, giving his own dropship the opening to approach the cannon. When they got close enough, the bay doors opened, and one of his Zealots leapt out to take out the operator of the cannon.

To his great surprise, not only was the gunner a Demon, it was one he recognized, the one with a skull on his helmet. The Demon quickly killed the first Zealot with enthusiasm, only to be impaled through the back by another Zealot who had snuck up behind it. It fell to the ground, only to bring its killer down with it by stabbing the high-ranking Sangheili in the head with its curved knife.

The Field Marshal leapt out of the Phantom, followed by his remaining Zealots and Unggoy. The only chance the human ship had to escape was if that cannon was manned.

"Take positions and do not let any humans get through," ordered the Field Marshal, and then radioed the pilot of his Phantom to take position just out of sight.

After receiving confirmation of his commands, the Field Marshal hefted the Fuel Rod Cannon onto his shoulder, and waited. He knew that the Demon had compatriots, and that they would not be far away.

Predictably, he heard a human weapon firing, and the death screams of Unggoy and Sangheili.

The Field Marshal only caught a glimpse of the Demon as it killed the last of his Zealots.

It was the lethal one. Without hesitation, the Field Marshal opened fire, while simultaneously moving around to make aiming harder for the Demon to hit him. Even with his maneuvering, the Demon still managed to get in a couple of shots, but nowhere near enough to take down the Field Marshal's shields. Similarly, the Field Marshal could not directly hit the Demon due to its astounding agility and cunning use of cover.

The Demon quickly made its way closer to the Field Marshal, and the latter realized that it was trying to get close enough so that the old general would risk harming himself while firing the Fuel Rod Cannon.

The Field Marshal decided to oblige the Demon by throwing away the heavy weapon and drawing his energy sword. With a battle cry, he charged the Demon, who was furiously firing its rifle at the attacking Sangheili.

The Field Marshal swung his sword as soon as he got into range. He missed the Demon, but succeeded in slicing the rifle in two. The Demon backed away, drawing its sidearm and firing that with equal ineffectiveness.

He charged again, bringing his blade up from bellowing, intending to bifurcate the Demon. It dodged his swing, and counterattacked by bludgeoning him with its gun. The punch dented the Field Marshal's shields, but did little more.

Finally, the Demon discarded its weapon, and drew a knife from its shoulder sheath.

'_So, this fight will end blade-to-blade, will it? How appropriate,'_ thought the Field Marshal, and gave his opponent one last look.

The Field Marshal knew that this Demon was the last of its team. The giant had most likely been the one on the Ardent Prayer, although he had no conclusive proof of this assertion. He had personally slain the small one with the artificial arm. The leader and the sniper were not present when his Phantom had approached, and the skull-faced one had been brought down by his Zealots.

This Demon was the last one standing, and it knew it.

And they both knew that the next stroke would be the finishing one.

The Demon moved first.

The Field Marshal reacted, bringing his sword up and swinging it down on his opponent, taking full advantage of his longer reach.

The Demon sidestepped the attack, and before the Field Marshal could blink, the metal of the Demon's blade buried itself in the Sangheili's throat.

For a moment, both combatants were still, before the Demon removed its blade and moved quickly to the cannon to finish its mission to defend the currently grounded ship.

The blade's injury damaged the Field Marshal's vocal chords, so he was unable to form his last words. But on his too-slow journey to the ground, the old general mentally recited the mantra of his rank.

With this sacrament of blood, we journey into the Divine Beyond.

As the defeated Field Marshal hit the ground, his last thought was to thank the Demon for giving him an honorable death.

* * *

><p>Author's Note: I decided to have a little creative freedom with the final battle between Noble Six and the Field Marshal. If you don't like it, then just imagine how that final fight went for you.

This was the seventh moment from the POV of the Field Marshal. There will be an epilogue from the POV of a Supreme Commander.

8. Noble

Supreme Commander Thel 'Vadamee gently touched down onto the planet's surface, courtesy of his Phantom's gravity beam. This was actually the his first time setting foot on the human planet known as Reach, and it would certainly be his last.

'Vadamee knew he should be chasing the human ship that had escaped (the _Pillar of Autumn_, he believed it was called), but before he did that, he had a quick errand to run.

The purpose of his visit was only steps away. There, lying almost dead on top of piles of Sangheili corpses was a Demon.

The Supreme Commander sighed and shook his head. The pile of dead represented the heavy casualties the humans had induced during the campaign that were even more costly than he had predicted. Only a quarter of his fleet remained, and even greater casualty rates occurred among the land forces.

Out of the races though, it was the Skirmishers who were hit the hardest. Ninety-five percent of their numbers were killed, completely devastating the already uncertain population of the subspecies of Kig-Yar. The Supreme Commander knew that the Skirmishers would never again see combat, even if they managed to survive extinction. Though he regretted it had to end this way, 'Vadamee believed that adding Skirmishers ensured that overall casualties were "most" instead of "total." Still, he knew he was going to have to face an inquiry about this from the High Council.

Dispelling these thoughts from his head, the Supreme Commander approached the body of the Demon.

The only reason 'Vadamee knew it was still alive was because it had slowly turned its head towards him as he approached. Oddly enough, the Demon did not have its helmet on, but its features were marred by lacerations, plasma burns, and blood. It looked like it was attempting to move, but the numerous injuries to its body prevented it from doing so. Clutched in an adamantine death grip was a blood-soaked knife, the weapon it had used to kill the last of the Sangheili around it.

The Supreme Commander stopped just out of arm's reach from the barely breathing Demon.

"Demon, I am Supreme Commander Thel 'Vadamee," he said simply in the human language. He was among the few Sangheili who had bothered to learn it, but he thought it practical, in the interest of knowing his enemy. "I know it was you who killed the Field Marshal."

The pilot of the Field Marshal's Phantom had been monitoring his superior officer's status during the battle. After the Field Marshal's death, the pilot radioed the fate of his general to the _Seeker of Truth_, and then met his own fate attempting to take down the cannon.

"I also know that you have caused my fleet a great deal of trouble," he continued, making sure to keep an eye on the Demon. While it seemed like it could not move, one could not be too careful. "I would list all of your accomplishments, but I do not have the time."

He took his blade from his side and ignited it.

"So I will say only this," he said, pulling the blade back behind his head, "You have proven yourself a noble warrior."

He stepped forward, and the Demon made one final effort. It swung its knife up, aiming directly at the Supreme Commander's throat. He caught its wrist in his unoccupied hand, surprised by the amount of force it could bring about despite its highly injured state. Without another moment to spare, 'Vadamee brought his blade forward and pierced the Demon's heart. Its life was immediately extinguished, evidenced by the dull look in its eyes. He released the grip on the Demon's wrist, and it fell lifelessly to the ground. Even in death, its hand kept a tight grasp on its knife.

His job finished, 'Vadamee deactivated his sword and returned it to his side. As he walked back to the gravity lift that would return him to his Phantom, he relayed orders that would prepare the _Seeker of

Truth_ and some other ships that would break formation and pursue the _Pillar of Autumn_ as soon as his dropship entered the launch bay. The rest of the fleet would stay and finish glassing the planet.

As the Supreme Commander was lifted into the Phantom and returned to his flagship, his thoughts once again turned to the heavy losses his fleet had sustained, but now there was another thought joining it.

From what they could discern, this planet called Reach, despite all the defenses and the number of ships, was _not_ the homeworld of the humans. That made 'Vadamee wonder how many other worlds were this fortified.

And if his fleet of over three hundred ships and millions of warriors emerged from Reach with more than three-fourths of their forces dead, what would the battle be like when the Covenant _did_ find the home of the humans?

Thel 'Vadamee trembled in excitement and terror at the thought.

* * *

><p>Author's Note: And that wraps up "Seven Moments." While it was probably unlikely that 'Vadamee would take time to make this trip with the _Pillar of Autumn_ fleeing Reach, I don't think it's completely impossible, considering the Elites' view of honor. Since Noble Six and his/her team was the biggest stumbling block of his campaign, he felt it his duty to not only avenge the death of the Field Marshal, but also to give the "Demon" an honorable death.

I also wonder if the nigh-extinction of the Skirmishers was one of the contributing factor's to 'Vadamee's downfall. While his primary crime to the Covenant was his failure to protect Halo, being responsible for almost wiping out one of their members races probably did not help his case.

End
file.